

TWO REPTILE CASE STUDIES

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If there has been one benefit to arise from the arrival of the cane toad in the Kimberley, it is that many people have developed an urgent need to count and document the wildlife that we have remaining in the region.

This has involved various organisations coming to town and trapping, tracking and identifying the few hardy species that have prevailed over the fires, feral cats and habitat destruction that they have been subject to over the past years.

In early 2011 Kununurra reptile experts Corrin Everrit and Bill Stewart of Kimberley Reptiles received 2 snakes into care that had consumed prey that were part of a study radio tracking blue tongued lizards around Kununurra.

One King Brown snake and one Black Headed Python had each eaten a blue tongued lizard with a radio tracker attached. The trackers survived well. Too well. The lizards did not.

Both snakes had been monitored in captivity for over 3 months, and neither had eaten or passed significant quantities of faeces. Both were strong and in good condition, but were clearly not going to pass the radio trackers and attached materials (fly wire and cable ties in one case), that had been used to attached the devises to the unlucky lizards.

These 2 case studies document the surgery done to remove the trackers from both snakes which were: expertly wrangled by Bill and Corrin, operated on by Dr Sarah Bonny, with Dr Sarah Brett as anaesthetist, and the very capable Nurses Desanka and Danni of the Kimberley Vet Centre team.

Both snakes were given gaseous inhaled anaesthesia (Isoflurane), kept warm during the procedures, and were treated with antibiotics and homeopathic remedies to prevent infection and treat the shock and trauma of their surgeries. Surgical incisions were made just below the rib line, and were sutured with absorbable suture material. Both snakes recovered very smoothly and recommenced eating and defaecating within weeks.

Unfortunately, in May this year, we received a second Black Headed Python into care with exactly the same problem. This case though, had consumed a radio tracked lizard from a **different** study... By the time we are all enjoying the AWRC Conference I hope that he will also be enjoying an indigestible-tracker free existence, as are these 2 snakes.

As of May 2012 the original Black Headed Python has been successfully released, and the King Brown is feeding well but is still being monitored in care. As his bowel movements are still somewhat irregular, he has not been released as yet.

These cases were particularly satisfying to treat, as we were able to heal them from a crisis created by human intervention into their environment. Kimberley Wildlife Rescue were most grateful to have the Lotterywest Wildlife Hospital available to us to facilitate the rehabilitation of these precious wildlife specimens from an unfortunate and undignified predicament that an ill-advised quest for knowledge had created.

DR SARAH BRETT: Dr. Sarah Brett has been helping East Kimberley native fauna for 15+ years in Kununurra, and also runs and owns the [Kimberley Vet Centre](#), which pays for most of Kimberley Wildlife Rescue's medication, food, supplies and other administrative costs. She has an extensive medical background and also takes on a holistic approach using homeopathic remedies to assist wildlife and domestic animals in the practice.

